23/2/72

Post-impressionism &
Catholicism ('they
thought I was cracked ...')

The Little Company of Mary
Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Harrow-on-the-Hill
Wednesday, February 23rd, 1972

Dearest René

Fist of all: ~~[illegible]~~ mea culpa mea culpa
mea maxima culpa ~~[illegible]~~ for my failure to
write to thank you for your letters
of weeks ~~[illegible]~~ & weeks back — please
forgive this disgusting neligence on my part
I have more than once begun letters to
you & then either something intermitted me
or I found what I had written was not
any good or what I wanted to say so
I tore it up. To say the truth I am
~~finding~~ finding it harder & harder to
express myself — frequently I write a
letter, may be about anything to anybody
& as like as not get to the middle
of the reverse side of the foolscap page
& write something so damned stupid
that I have to start all over again.
& the neglected correspondence piles up,
& that I can't cope.
But with the arrival this A.M. of
your letter written on February 16th — together
with the inscription I pushed all
aside to at least write this brief
note of thanks.
René, how do you manage to
make the thing direct — that is
what beats me. There appear to be
no corrections in the forms, it's
just painted straight away as though
one were writing. When I used to
make inscriptions it took endless
time adjusting & modifying the juxtaposed
forms of the letters — I mean
one might ~~manage~~ manage to make
~~[illegible]~~ a fairly satisfactory A or N
& then make a hopeless mess of
say, the following ~~[illegible]~~ AM should
the word chanced to be, say,
anamesis or what not, and as
for an O, well, ~~[illegible] would have~~
~~to do~~ something in the nature of a
miracle would be required to get
it even remotely what one wanted
first go — and as soon as one had
made the diphthong Æ one saw
the necessity of Æ & so on.
But you seem able to
make the fluent forms with
the ability of professional
sign-writer. It's a marvel to
me how you manage it, though I

NB None of this letter has been read through
or I shall miss post, so heaven knows
what mistakes I've made.
David.

can see how it goes with your clarity of mind & fluent ability
in so many matters.

I'm not quite so happy about that
particular script (as distinct from your handling of it)
the concurrence of so many 'circlic' forms tend
toward a feeling of rotundity ~~so that one~~ unchecked
by [illegible] forms more angular ~~or~~ rectilinear,
or more space between the lines — or something.
It's always, in visual art-works this business of
the form of the space being as important as
the ~~stuff~~ ~~forms~~ forms drawn or what not, on
~~the~~ parts of the 'space' — but this is impossible
to go into here — I'll have a shot at explaining
what I mean in my next letter, as I want to get
this note posted to you to-day and if I don't
get this written & envelopped in time for someone
to post it for me it won't get posted till tomorrow.

You are also constantly in my mind too
especially of late. — but I'm flooded out
with letters & stuff I can't answer from various
blokes wanting to know what I mean in such &
such a passage of *I.P.* or *The Ana.* & now
*Epoch & Artist* is out of print I can't write
a note to say I've ~~was~~ explained all that to
the best of my ability in that collection of essays.

Yes, that's a bloody true saying of old
Connington you ~~quote~~ quote — God! how true.
And *now* 'analysis' is all they do.

No, I didn't know you'd written a
long review in *Blackfriars* of David Blamires
book. How can I get a copy of it?
What was the date? So you took a very
severe view of it. I thought he
got certain points pretty well:
especially, I think about *I.P.*
Yes, the Maritain part not but
they never get that right.

When I was at Westminster Art School
in 1919-20 before I'd ~~heard~~ ever
heard of Maritain, etc, I used to
say to chaps that I thought the
*theory* of Post Impressionism, that
a painting or what not being *a thing*
& not the representation of something,
was analogous to what the Catholic
Church maintains in her dogma
of the Mass — they thought I was
absolutely cracked — (especially the
Catholic ones!) ~~well~~ since those days
I've tried to get that analogy across

a fair number of times — but no, they won't bite. I was 'inside' a Catholic in the trenches in
1917, but not so you know formally one until 1921. The Bk League Exhibition — lord!
with me tied up here, has been a business. Douglas ran off & came out with lists of
pictures etc. but it was all hopelessly *rushed* — one needs weeks & weeks to
deal with that sort of thing. More & more last minute letters. I've been feeling pretty
low of late & worried about all kinds of things. By the way, it was
"And what should the City of Cork be in but a cork frame" Must shut up now
for the person is waiting to post it for me — will continue tomorrow or
next day. Many many thanks for your present

Much love to Joan & Ros & yourself

in great haste Dai.

E.Q. = E.Q. Nicholson, Ben N.'s sister-in-law